table, or a guinea pig, which are excellent tidbits, though the lack of salt makes culinary success doubtful for one who has been used to it from the very baptismal font.

The Indians like a white person to be free and easy with them and to appreciate their things. So it was that I, when I was in their camps, after having gained their confidence, would go about here and there tasting their food, and they would be beside themselves with laughter while I repeated "hiss," "hiss," which means "good," "good." Of course one must eat with the fork which nature has supplied, with the exception of soup which is drunk with the shell of a clam which is very abundant in the surrounding lakes. Where I did almost jeopardize my reputation was once when I had to drink from a vile gourd with a really filthy lip. But I closed my eyes and a few moments later opened them covered with glory, and triumphant.

On that occasion, upon taking our leave, the Indians indicated that they wished to see us fire our rifles and we, to please them, fired two or three times into the air. It was something to hear the yelling of those women, and to see the tumult of boys struggling to pick up the shells. How similar is man in all stages of civilization and age.

I was forgetting to say that the width of the huts is hardly ever greater than the length of a bed.

Chapter IV

The Indian Women

Let us now for a while take up the matter of the Indian women. The Mataco women are generally rather short, but this does not keep them from being, on occasion, quite charming and well formed while they are young [179]. While living among them it is not unusual to see them naked, but in the presence of strangers they never lack a more or less protective fig leaf. On board our ship we had, for a good many days, a man and his wife. The latter wore a pair of shorts such as those we wear when we go bathing, and as she was young and well built and good looking, I can give assurance that the situation was of somewhat questionable benefit to some of our argonauts, forced anchorites as they were.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

are due — at least in part — to geographical causes. As to the Choroti, it is to be noticed that among them the women in general have great social importance, to such an extent in fact, that we may speak of a real gynaecocracy. This is in the first place due to the numerical disproportion between the sexes which, at least at present, exists in this tribe. The causes of this phenomenon are difficult to assign; there is for instance, no general custom of killing new-born female children which would account for it. Infanticide is indeed practised in the case of monstrous children and twins, but it has reference to male children as well as to female. Female children are appreciated perhaps more than male children, for the very reason that women are so few in the Choroti society. Whatever the real cause of the numerical paucity of the women, it is this fact which explains their social influence. Besides this, we have to take into consideration the strict division of labour between the sexes existing among the Indians. For instance, sowing and planting, the carrying of fuel, the gathering of wild fruits, the brewing of intoxicating drinks, and a good deal of other home industries are wholly or chiefly incumbent on the women. This to the Indians means that no man *can* successfully do work which custom prescribes shall be done by a woman. A consequence of this is that particular importance is ascribed to female work as such and that women in general are held in great esteem. From this point of view we must also explain the custom that a man who marries must go and live with his wife's family. It is mainly due to the reluctance of her parents to separate from her on account of the work she performs. Among the Choroti no compensation is given for a bride, because no bargaining of any kind whatever takes place between the members of the tribes. Instead of that, custom prescribes that the young husband shall render services to her parents, which is only possible if he stays with the family of his spouse for a longer or shorter time. In this way matrilocal marriage in the Choroti and other Chaco tribes seems to me to have originated, although the Choroti at any rate are not now aware of these services being really obligatory and a form of compensation for the wife. Marriage among them appears now as a wholly private affair based upon the voluntary agreement of both parties. But where a matrilocal marriage has developed, the children are naturally looked upon as belonging in the first place to the mother and to her tribe or clan, whereas the husband's importance as a family father is only secondary.

The same kind of »mother-right» and gynaecocracy also prevails, or prevailed formerly, among the *Mataco* Indians who, for instance, allow

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12

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562 the girl to take the first step towards contracting marriage, just as is the
584 case with the Choroti. Similarly the *Tobas* trace descent through the
T female, but social conditions in the Toba society are more highly dif-
611 ferentiated and the influence of the women is limited accordingly. The
562 social position of the Indian woman and the characteristic liberty given her by custom appears in matters of love and marriage, a topic dealt with in the following chapter.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK 6

C 581 584 or whom she only wants for a temporary lover. Above all she wants as a husband a man who treats her well and possesses the qualities necessary to support the future family. Since the Choroti to a great extent live by fishing, skill in this art is naturally reckoned among a man's most praiseworthy qualities. Importance is also attached to skill in gardening and hunting. Consequently, when a young man is courting a girl, he tries to gain her favour by presenting her with fish in abundance. I was told that when several men are courting the same girl — which naturally is often the case — the man who brought her the largest quantities of fish had the greatest chance of gaining preference.

C 581 593 Thus among the Choroti, marriage is from a man's point of view an important matter. When the parents send out their young son to take part in the dances and to find a wife, they follow his undertaking with the keenest interest. Every evening the father shakes his magical rattle gourd (*pelīte*) in order to promote his son's enterprise and »hurry on» the girls on his behalf. When the rattle gourd is used for such practical purposes the ceremony is called *nekeẅlitse símă*, which literally means: »to shake the rattle to get (or obtain) something».

C 585 Apart from these ceremonies in connection with courtship, there are no particular marriage rites, except the necessary drinking-bout which accompanies all family feasts and in which only the men take part. The young couple are without any further ceremony regarded as married, but marriage is not fully complete until a child is born.

M [171] [562] 527 636 584 Among the *Mataco*, marriages are not particularly contracted in connection with the dances, but conditions are the same as among the Choroti in so far as the women play the active part both as concerns incidental amorous relations and marriages proper. The great drinking-feasts during the algaroba season are the occasions when a woman enters into temporary or permanent relation with a man. When the men are intoxicated, the girls avail themselves of the opportunity, seize the youths whom they like by the hands and take them to their houses where they spend the night with them. These liaisons lead in many cases to real marriages.

M 585 789 535 When marriage is agreed upon, it is celebrated with the usual ceremonies which have a religious significance. The drum, the most important magical instrument of the Mataco, is beaten the whole night with a view to keeping off evil spirits from the couple. Similarly, a ceremonial dance, called *Nahútsak*, is performed in the evening. It is a ring-dance much like the marriage dance *Avúshe* of the Choroti. The couple being married are seated in the middle of the ring and their friends dance and chant around

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Chapter V.

Position of the women. Division of labour.

The influential position of the women among the Chaco Indians has already been touched upon. The facts mentioned as to the »mother-right» prevailing among these Indians, the right of the Choroti and Mataco women to propose marriage, etc. give us to understand that the social position of the Chaco woman is by no means that of an oppressed slave, as it has sometimes been described by superficial observers. Even the Tobas, in spite of comparatively frequent divorce, hold their women in high esteem, as may indeed be inferred from one of their myths about the origin of the women. It is therefore impossible to subscribe to the opinion expressed by Campos with special reference to the Tobas when he says that »the women, as has been stated by all, are the yoke-carriers of the house; they are the slaves and not the comrades of the men». Only a passing traveller, who has not had an opportunity to study the social conditions of the natives properly, can arrive at such an opinion. It is true that matrimonial relations are not as ideal among the Tobas as among the Choroti, where women have the right to choose husbands and wholly dominate the family life. Among the Tobas it may happen — as would never happen among the Choroti — that a husband beats his wife, either because he is bad himself or because she has proved unfaithful and tried his patience too much by her jealousy; but such cases are rather exceptions than the rule; generally the Toba husband treats his wife with kindness and affection.

The division of labour between the sexes prevailing in the Chaco as in other parts of South America, easily gives a superficial observer the impression that the women are treated by the men as inferior and subjugated beings. The home industries, especially spinning, weaving, and pottery-making, are wholly in the hands of the women. They not only have to do

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12

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462 the general domestic work, but in particular to collect and carry home wild roots and fruit from the forest as well as fire-wood and water. Thus every afternoon one can see the women returning home laden with heavy burdens of fuel or of algaroba or other fruits, carried in large net-bags. The hardest workers in all tribes are the older women. At any rate I noticed that the younger married Toba women shunned the heaviest work, for instance the carrying of fuel, leaving this to the older women of the family. As to agriculture, both sexes take part in it, but the men do the rough work, felling the trees and clearing the ground. The domestic animals, that is to say, the goats, sheep and fowls, are left to the care of the women. The men, in addition to the rough work they perform in agriculture, reckon fishing and hunting as their main occupations. the Toba men being also frequently occupied in warfare, which is a real T
[825] profession among these Indians. The armadillo, which is regarded by the Tobas as a »female» animal, is the only game caught by the women.

This division of labour is very strictly observed. It is not an accidental institution, nor due to the desire of the men to oppress the weaker members of society and to compel them to do such kinds of work as they do not, for one reason or another, like themselves. It is, as it were, founded upon the nature of things and in some cases connected with the animistic ideas of the natives. A man would be ashamed to do work which according to custom is incumbent on the women, and similarly a woman would seem ridiculous did she perform a man's work. A European who notices for instance a Choroti family when about to move, and sees the wife laden with an enormous burden of things belonging to the family, and perhaps a sucking child in addition, whereas her husband goes free and disengaged, only carriyng his bow and arrows, might easily arrive at the conclusion that the Choroti husband treats his wife like a slave; but the conclusion would nevertheless be wrong. The husband must have his hands free among other things to be able to defend the family with his weapons against venomous snakes or other dangers threatening it on the way, or to hunt. The women themselves look upon this state of things as being perfectly natural.

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462 The industry which is characteristic of the Indian woman in the
562 Chaco as elsewhere in South America is thus by no means an expression of her inferior social position. The work she does is not compulsory but voluntary and must be wholly explained by the conditions of life which have developed among the Indians. Mr. Grubb, who during his long stay among the Chaco Indians acquired a perfect knowledge of their

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12

psychology, is quite right when he points out that in reality the men do their fair share of the work, although it is not seen to such advantage as that of the women. Thus fishing and hunting which are the chief occupations of the men are by no means a pastime or recreation, but a serious, onerous, and often dangerous undertaking; and the same of course, in a still higher degree, holds true of warfare.

As to the Toba woman, her independent and influential position appears in its way from the right she possesses to decide about the future husband of her daughter; as we have seen, the mother's consent is particularly required. The women also show their influence when raids against other tribes are planned, exciting the passions and revengefulness of the men. And in all tribes the women serve as permanent and self-elected arbitrators. When quarrels arise at the drinking-feasts, which is not unfrequently the case, and threaten to develop into sanguinary fights, it is the women that allay the agitated feelings and separate the fighters, thus preventing more serious calamities.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 S17 Mataco S17
Toba S112

first place, of course, of the chiefs. The children are adopted as members of the tribe, and they readily amalgamate with it, the more so as the captives are generally well treated and admitted to equal privileges with their conquerors.

All Indian tribes of the Pilcomayo were formerly scalp-hunters and head-hunters, and some of them still practise this custom. The head of the slain enemy was cut off, the scalp stripped from the scull, and both were kept as a sort of trophy. Shortly before I arrived at the Pilcomayo in 1911, the *Ashluslay* had succeeded in killing nineteen Bolivian soldiers who were marching down to one of the military settlements on the river. The heads of the young men had been cut off and taken home by the Indians. Later on it was reported that their scalps or skulls, fixed on long poles, decorated the entrance of the main Indian village, being used at the great feasts as drinking-cups which were believed to inspire the drinkers with courage. For my own part I have not been able to gather more particulars about these head-hunting practices of the Chaco Indians, nor has any other traveller given information on this point. On the war customs observed by the Argentine Mataco-Vejos, the Italian traveller Pelleschi makes the following statement: »Whosoever kills an enemy wears as a trophy, if he has time to secure it, the scalp with the hair, the ears, and possibly a fold of skin from the back of the neck. He forms it to the shape of a cup by means of a bulrush or a flexible twig, which he binds and stitches all round the edge; then, while still bloody, he fills it with liquor, and holding it by the hair, passes it round to his companions, who empty it as they drink in honour of the victor and in scorn of the vanquished. Another way is to hold the scalp by the edge and pour out the liquor in drops over the hair and jaws.» [1])

As to the *Tobas*, I have gathered that when they return home after a successful attack a great feast is held, when the spoils taken on the war expedition are brought forth in triumph, dances are performed, and algaroba beer is drunk to excess. Dancing forms an important part of the feast. The victory dance of the Tobas is *Nomi* which is performed by the younger warriors during the day. A special dance is performed round the scalps, hung on high poles in the middle of the village, and beer is drunk from the skulls, but I have no more details about these ceremonies. Nordenskiöld, who during his travels in the Chaco came across a scalp taken by the *Mataco* in one of their wars, mentions in passing that

[1]) Pelleschi, *Eight Months on the Gran Chaco*, p. 80.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12

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»before the Indians parted with their trophy they demanded that their old women should be allowed to sing and dance with it». It is a pity that Nordenskiöld, dominated by his exclusive interest to obtain a rare Indian »curiosity», did not avail himself of the excellent opportunity to inquire as to the ideas which the Indians connected with this scalp-dance of the women. We must look for an explanation from other sources. In the account I have given of the war customs of the Jibaros I have shown that they are wholly founded on magical ideas. The hair and head of the slain enemy is regarded as the seat of his soul or spirit and therefore is full of mysterious power. In fact, through the dances and other ceremonies performed with the scalp or head, the trophy is turned into a fetish which will promote the luck of the victor in various respects. The fact that the women play the most important rôle at the scalp-feasts — which seems to be almost a general rule — is also due to special magical ideas. The most important of the beneficial effects ascribed to the trophy is that it promotes fertility and renders the domestic animals prolific. Since, according to the belief of uncivilized peoples, woman is, as it were, the symbol of fertility, not only in the human world, but also in the animal world and in nature, it is reasonable to assume that women perform the scalp-dance precisely to promote fertility by means of the lucky object. Such is the case for instance among the Jibaros, where the dance of »supplication» round the trophy is professedly resorted to with a view to making the harvest abundant and the domestic animals prolific. Evidently the Chaco Indians entertain similar ideas. Since the head or the scalp is full of spiritual power we can also easily understand that the Indians believe themselves to be »inspired with courage» by drinking from the trophy.

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Special honour is paid among the Tobas to chiefs who have carried a war to a successful end. The ordinary chiefs receive confirmation in their dignity by the Council of the Old Men, and the young temporary leader, elected for that particular war expedition, is made an ordinary chief in recognition of his merits.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti 586

C 262

spirits, but not for old men who are initiated in the magic art and know how to render them harmless. — It is curious that on the other hand an animal like the *deer* is regarded by the Choroti as absolutely unfit for food. Not even old men would touch the flesh of deer, believing that if they did, they would die. This is due to the belief, mentioned before, that the deer is an evil spirit (*môhsek*), the reincarnation of the spirit of a sorcerer, a superstition which is widespread among the South American Indians and everywhere manifests itself in an aversion to eating the meat of this innocent animal.

M 785

Ceremonial fasting, as we have seen, is prescribed among the Choroti and the Mataco on certain occasions which are regarded as important and critical in some respect. Thus the father has to restrict his diet when he is lying in couvade, and girls have to diet during their first menstruation. We have also seen that behind these practices there is the fear of evil spirits in one form or another.

If disease and death bringing demons are believed to enter easily into the body with the food eaten, we can understand why eating is so often to the Indians a ceremonial business. This is also intelligible from the point of view that by eating an animal and coming in contact with its soul, a man may acquire the spiritual qualities of that animal. This idea explains the curious custom practised among the Tobas, that when a chief's daughter attains puberty, the men alone have to eat the meat of the ostrich, whereas the women eat the meat of the armadillo. As a general rule, both among the Tobas and among other Chaco Indians, men and women do not eat together but separately, the men first and the women afterwards. This custom is observed so strictly, that one may assume a particular superstition behind it. Moreover, when the Indians eat, they do not speak much with one another and do not like to be spoken to. Since they believe that man may evade evil spirits by keeping silence and avoiding attracting their attention, it is possible that the ceremonial character of their banquets is partly connected with this idea. And as women are especially believed to attract the spirits, this may be, or may originally have been, one reason why the men avoid eating with them. But it should also be remembered that in primitive societes eating together is believed to establish a mysterious union or connection between all those taking part in the common banquet. Since a strict distinction is made between a man's and a woman's spiritual qualities, it is not difficult to understand that the men avoid the company of the women on those occasions when they eat. However

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2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba S112
Choroti SK6

C 765 forming a falling scale in a minor key, which makes a very peculiar impression. At the time of mourning the women and children commence this wailing at fairly regular intervals and all at once, as if it were agreed upon. To one who lives for some time in a Choroti village it is evident C 765 that wailing forms part of Indian etiquette. Not only must the mourners, when they arrive from another village, which has been abandoned on 576 account of a death, be received by a choir of weeping women and children; any guest who arrives in a village shortly after a death has taken place there is received in the same way. When in March 1912 I visited the Choroti in the interior of their land, where no European had yet penetrated, I noticed with astonishment that on my arrival at a village I was received with loud wailing by the women and children. I soon learnt that a great chief had died some time ago; but the fact that the wailing was renewed to receive me remained unexplained. I was told, however, that this peculiar way of receiving strangers was prescribed by Choroti custom. The most probable explanation seems to me that it is feared lest the spirit of the defunct should revisit his people in a strange disguise, and that the wailing has for its object to propitiate him or to frighten him away. Such ideas prevail among other South American tribes also, both in the Chaco and elsewhere.

M C T 765 302 562 There are certain other customs observed in connection with mourning, but they are as a rule limited to the women. Among all Pilcomayo tribes it is customary that when a man dies, his widow, daughters, and sisters cut their hair short with the sharp teeth of the *palometa* fish and burn it. Ceremonial wailing always attends the cutting of the hair. When I asked the Choroti why a widow cuts and destroys her hair after the death of her husband, I was told that the dead husband, who wants his wife to follow him to the grave, is believed to attack her through the hair. In order to rid herself of this danger she shaves it off. Exactly T 765 the same belief prevails among the Tobas: the dead husband or father will seize his surviving wife or daughter by the hair and cause her to fall ill and die. Among the Tobas a widow cuts her hair twice, first immediately after the husband's death, the second time some months later T [602] when the hair has again grown long. At the same time she repeats the wailing. Similarly the nearest female relatives have to diet, in so far as they are not allowed to eat fish for many months. If they infringe the rules of diet in regard to fish they may sicken and die. After a Toba woman has cut her hair the second time she may again eat fish, her mourning is over and she is allowed to marry again. Even some of the

756 The witch doctors have, also, the power of turning themselves into animals or fire that licks up the underbrush in their path.

In order to overcome diseases, the witch doctors make use of [825] small wands which the spirits have given them; they use also the wings of several birls (yulo, carancho).

Animals as well as men can be treated by the witch doctors. An informant described to me the treatment which was given to a horse. The witch doctor first recited an enchantment and then applied suction to the horse's rump until he was able to extract a small piece of wood which he said was the cause of the malady.

[754] Some witch doctors are extremely dangerous. They start by devouring dogs and then go on to attack men. It is almost impossible to put an end to their criminal career for they revive if they are killed and if they are burned to death they will still return.

[562] Some women can become witch doctors, although they enjoy far less prestige than do the man. Their vocation is made apparent by the following signs: they spend hours on end crouched over the ground, continually swaying back and forth, finally they make an attempt to flee into the underbrush and their strength is such that several men cannot restrain them. Once off in the bush, they tear off their [17] clothes and climb a tree, where they remain for several days swaying and singing.

Magic

789 609 The Matacos of San Andres complain bitterly that their neighbors the Tobas of the Pilcomayo river are great practitioners of magic. During the period of my stay at their village a Toba arrived to visit one of his friends. Not finding him at home he went to several huts in the hope of finding him. When he left, the Matacos accused him of witchcraft and said that his comings and goings were only to gather leavings (hair, nail parings, pieces of cloth, etc.) belonging to the people he had visited. The fact is that many of the persons whose houses the Toba visited became sick, which only confirmed the Matacos' suspicions. Nevertheless no sanction whatever came from this to the supposed criminal.

6:Métraux E-5 (no date) 1943 SI7 Mataco SI7

been told about a Toba or a Pilaga who killed himself. Apparently, suicide is a culture trait restricted to the Matako.

Can this pathological condition be attributed to the life in the mission and to the discipline imposed upon the natives who have shown willingness to become Christians? The psychological motivation for conversion is undoubtedly fear of the white men and hunger. The missions are a buffer between the Indians and the ruthless white colonists. In the missions the Indians find jobs and, in case of distress, food. They also receive free medical treatment. The price they must pay for these privileges is to give up dancing and drinking, to abandon warfare and native sports and to forget shamanism. In addition they are expected to go to church twice daily and the children and many adults spend part of the day in school. Life under such conditions is extremely dull. All the activities that made life worth while disappear unless they can secretly play hockey or indulge in a drinking bout. This, of course, they quite frequently do. Although their present situation can explain their indifference, their anxieties and their lack of attachment to life, can the mission discipline be held responsble for the Metako suicidal mania?

In six of the cases cited above, marital maladjustment was blamed for the suicide attempt. In one case, the suicide was attributed to lack of sexual gratification. One couple attempted suicide because of the insults showered upon them by an angry and frustrated woman. One case may be ascribed both to sexual maladjustment and fear (the case of Martin). Criticism by neighbors is the cause in one instance. In only one case that of the old woman who had lost her son, can grief be considered the determining reason for the suicide.

In addition, there is no doubt that suicide among these people has a decidedly aggressive character. The Matako use suicide as a threat; by killing themselves, they punish the person who has offended them. The punitive character of suicide leads to the problem of aggression and aggressiveness among these people. In daily life little direct aggression is shown in their mutual relations. There are almost no quarrels; ordinarily men are not harsh to the women. Children are coddled and are seldom scolded. Nevertheless, strong aggresive tendencies exist. Whoever has witnessed a hockey party on the Pilcomayo loses any illusion he may have had about the gentleness and softness of Matako manners. In its brutality and fierceness each hockey party resembles a pitched battle. The Indians paint themselves and dress as if they were getting ready to face a real enemy. The teams are formed by men who are related by blood or who live in the same community. The adversaries are frequently members of bands which are on unfriendly